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ABSTRACT

This evaluation report is the second publication from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services' (DCJS) ongoing evaluation of the Virginia School Resource Officer (SRO) program. The findings are based on data submitted by 78 local SRO programs, all of which were awarded grants of federal or state monies from DCJS. The findings are organized under four topics: the scope and nature of school crime; SRO efforts to prevent or reduce school crime; student and staff opinion with regard to SROs and SRO effectiveness; and comparing fiscal year 2000 findings with fiscal year 1999 findings. Conclusions indicate that while many students witness illegal behavior and a substantial number experience theft, minor assault and bullying, the overwhelming majority (of students and staff) feels safe at school. The report maintains that Virginia's state-assisted SRO programs are reducing school violence and increasing the feeling of safety among school staff and students. State-funded SROs have succeeded in their roles as law enforcers, instructors, crime prevention specialists, and community liaisons and are viewed as effective agents of change. (GCP)

Report of the
Department of Criminal Justice Services

Second Annual Evaluation of DCJS Funded School Resource Officer Programs

Fiscal Year 1999-2000



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Second Annual Evaluation of DCJS-Funded SRO Programs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	4
DCJS Efforts to Improve the Professional Stature of SROs	4
Goals and Objectives of the Second Evaluation Report	4
Evaluation Methodology	5
Data Sources	5
Data Uses	5
Test for Sub-Population Differences	5
Limitations of the Data	6
Report Structure: Perception, Reality and SRO Response to School Crime	6
THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF SCHOOL CRIME	7
Perceptions of School Crime by Students and Staff	7
Survey Respondents	7
Student and Staff Feelings of Safety	7
Student/Staff Vulnerability in Certain School Locations and at Certain Times	8
Staff Fears of Being Victimized	9
Student and Staff Exposure to Crime	9
Reality: School Incident Reports from School Year 1999-2000	11
Incident Types	11
Incident Code Violations	11
Incident Location	12
Offender Characteristics	12
Victim Characteristics	13
Actions Taken by School Officials and SROs	13
SRO EFFORTS TO PREVENT OR REDUCE SCHOOL CRIME	15
SROs as Law Enforcers	15
SROs as Instructors of Law-Related Education Classes	17
SROs as Crime Prevention Specialists	18
SRO as School/Community Liaisons	20
STUDENT AND STAFF OPINION OF SRO PROGRAMMING	21
Staff and Students Strongly Supported the Presence of SROs	21
Support Increased as Interaction with SROs Increased	21
Students and Staff Viewed SROs as Effective	22
Staff Agreed that SROs Provide Other Benefits	22
SRO's Report a Reduction in the Number of Assaults	22
COMPARING FY2000 FINDINGS WITH FY1999 FINDINGS	23
FY2000 Data is of Higher Quality than the FY1999 Data	23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report is the second publication from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services' on-going evaluation of the Virginia School Resource Officer (SRO) program. The findings are based on data submitted by 78 local SRO programs, all of which were awarded grants of federal or state monies from DCJS. The data reflects SRO program activity from July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000 (FY2000). During this period, 107 DCJS-administered grants funded 117 SRO positions.

The FY2000 evaluation data was taken from 360 SRO Quarterly Activity Reports (QARs), 8,889 School Incident Reports (63% from high schools; 36% from middle schools; 1% from elementary schools), 87 Lessons from the Field Reports (LFF), 4,813 completed staff surveys on school safety (70% from high schools; 30% from middle schools), and 36,625 completed student surveys on school safety (62% from high schools; 38% from middle schools).

The findings are organized under four topics:

- The scope and nature of school crime.
- SRO efforts to prevent or reduce school crime (as documented in SRO Quarterly Activities Reports).
- Student and staff opinion with regard to SROs and SRO effectiveness (as revealed by the staff and student surveys).
- Comparing FY2000 Findings with FY1999 Findings

The scope and nature of school crime.

As defined by survey items that revealed the perceptions and personal experiences of students and staff.

- 85% of students and 96% of staff reported that they felt "somewhat safe" or "very safe" at school, yet the percentage who felt "very safe" was considerably higher among staff (61%), than among students (27%).
- Students reported that they felt more vulnerable to crime than staff, both at all school locations and before or after school. There were no locations where their feelings of vulnerability were alarmingly high.
- Staff felt generally safe but feared victimization by intruders more than they feared victimization by students, gang members or parents.
- 40% of students and 36% of staff said they had items stolen since the start of school and 26% of students and 19% of staff said they were bullied or verbally intimidated. 31% of students and 2% of staff reported being "punched, slapped or kicked on purpose." #
- Many students witnessed criminal behavior while at school. For example, 70% reported seeing someone punched, slapped or kicked on purpose, 61% saw someone being threatened or bullied, 40% saw someone in possession of, or under the influence of, marijuana or some other illegal drug, and 26% saw someone in possession of a knife or other sharp object for protection.

CONCLUSIONS

- *The overwhelming majority of students and staff feel safe at school.*
- *Compared to students, staff are much more likely to report feeling "very" safe.*
- *A substantial number of students and staff are victimized while at school.*
- *Two-thirds of the students saw someone being bullied or being punched, slapped or kicked on purpose.*

As documented by 8,889 school incident reports (SIRs).

- SROs classified the offenses they reported as 50% crimes against persons, 11% property crimes, 8% drug-related crimes and 1% gang related crimes. The 30% remaining included offenses such as truancy, possession or use of tobacco, disorderly conduct, profanity, and vandalism.
- SROs were instructed to report and classify all behaviors they considered violations of the *Code of Virginia*. Violations involving intentional physical violence (shoving, hitting, simple assault, mutual assault, aggravated assault, felonious assault, malicious wounding, rape, and sexual assault) accounted for 24% of all violations reported.

- The reported incidents took place in the following locations: outside, including the parking lot (24%), classrooms (25%), corridors or hallways (18%), school buses (8%), bathrooms (7%), athletic venues (7%), cafeterias (6%) and other or unknown (5%).
- Among offenders, 90% were students, 2% were non-student juveniles, 1% were staff and the rest unknown (7%). 73% were male and 27% were female. 62% committed their offense at high schools, 37% at middle schools and 1% at elementary schools.
- 52% of all incidents involved crimes against persons. Of persons victimized, 76% were students, 20% were staff, 3% were non-student juveniles and 1% were unknown. Staff victims were more likely to be female (52%) and student victims more likely male (59%). The majority of both types of victims were victimized in high schools (59% staff and 55% student).
- 55% of reported incidents involved school suspensions, 11% school detentions, 30% involved the filing of criminal investigative reports and 32% involved referral to juvenile or general district.

CONCLUSIONS

- *SROs deal with a wide range of criminal offenses, one quarter of which involves intentional physical violence.*
- *Most offenders are male students. The majority of student victims are male and the majority of staff victims are female.*
- *Incidents take place in a wide variety of locations on school property.*

SRO efforts to prevent or reduce school crime (as documented in SRO Quarterly Activities Reports).

- Content analyses of written responses from 360 QARs revealed that SROs successfully introduced or increased law enforcement in the school environment. They increased student supervision, increased student and staff understanding of the law, and generated valuable criminal intelligence networks.
- SROs were asked to identify factors that helped or hindered law enforcement within schools. Of the 186 helping factors mentioned, 61% had to do with gaining the trust of staff, students, parents, etc., 12% spoke of the benefits of private offices, phone lines, computers, cell phones, etc., 7% cited the willingness of staff to include and inform SROs, and 5% extolled the advantages of longevity and of being assigned to only one school.
- Of the 84 hindering factors, 46% concerned overly protective teachers and administrators, 17% referenced the lack of resources (private offices, phone lines, cell phones, etc.), 11% mentioned time limitations due to workload, assignment to multiple schools, time in court, etc., 8% cited the poor design of schools, and 8% cited a lack of support from School Board, Superintendent, Court, and parents.
- SROs conducted 596 law-related education classes with a total audience of 59,742 persons. 36% of the classes were "Class Action" classes.

CONCLUSIONS

- *SROs successfully performed as law enforcers, instructors of law-related educational classes, crime prevention specialists, and community liaisons. They participated in school security assessments, applied Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to reduce the probability of crime, developed or improved school crime prevention policies, intervened in conflicts before they escalated into reportable incidents, and engaged students and staff in crime prevention activities.*
- *SROs are reducing violence in school. Their comments on quarterly activity and "lessons from the field" reports provided substantial anecdotal evidence of this effect. For example, 29 SROs noted that there had been a reduction in fights since their arrival at school. Furthermore, 82% of the staff respondents and 53% of the students agreed that "SROs have reduced student fighting."*

Student and staff opinion with regard to SROs and SRO effectiveness (as revealed by the staff and student surveys).

- 99% of staff and 91% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I support having a SRO assigned to my school." Compared with staff, students were less likely to "strongly agree" (84% vs. 48%). Agreement among both groups increased as interaction with SROs increased.
- Most staff and a substantial majority of students said that SROs increased student knowledge of the legal system, increased student understanding of what's legal and illegal, reduced fear of crime among staff and students, and reduced student fighting. Furthermore, the great majority of staff reported that SROs reduced threats and bullying among students, made it easier to maintain order in school and improved educator-law enforcement collaboration.

CONCLUSION

- *Nearly all students and staff supported the presence of SROs in school and substantial majorities of both groups rated SROs as effective in reducing fear, fighting and incidents of bullying.*

Comparing FY2000 Findings with FY1999 Findings

- The FY 2000 findings confirm those revealed by the FY1999 findings.
- Between spring 1999 and spring 2000, there was a small but across-the-board increase in student and staff feelings of safety (both in general and when respondents considered various locations in their schools).
- The findings of this report are based on better data than that available for our first report. The data was obtained from SROs who had more job experience and from students and staff who had more exposure to SROs. The report forms and surveys used to obtain data had been improved in response to SRO feedback. In addition, the FY2000 findings were based on larger samples of SRO reports, SIRs and survey respondents.

CONCLUSION

- *Findings from the FY2000 data confirm or validate the findings from our earlier report. This fact lends greater credence to both sets of findings.*

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

While many students witness illegal behavior and a substantial number experience theft, minor assault and bullying, the overwhelming majority (of students and staff) feel safe at school.

SROs respond to a wide variety of criminal offenses at a wide variety of school locations.

Virginia's state-assisted SRO programs are reducing school violence and increasing the feeling of safety among school staff and students. State-funded SROs have succeeded in their roles as law enforcers, instructors, crime prevention specialists and community liaisons and are viewed as effective agents of change. They deal with a wide range of criminal behavior and are providing services that are critical to the goal of improving school safety. They constitute an increasingly professional cadre who has earned a high degree of support from students and staff.

INTRODUCTION

"Parents and students have come to accept the position of SRO as part of public education. Many parents expressed the belief that their children were safer in schools that had SROs. I feel the program has helped the image of law enforcement in my community."

SRO, Carroll County Sheriff's Office

This report is the second publication of findings from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services' ongoing evaluation of the Virginia School Resource Officer program.¹ The findings are based on data submitted by 78 local SRO programs, all of which were awarded grants of federal or state monies from DCJS. DCJS staff monitored these grants and research staff of the DCJS Crime Prevention Center conducted the evaluation. The findings reflect SRO program activity from July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000. During this period, 107 DCJS-administered grants funded 117 SRO positions.²

DCIS Efforts to Improve the Professional Stature of SROs

Although only a quarter of Virginia's SRO positions³ are funded by state government (via grants of federal pass-through and state general revenue monies), state officials have used this authority to increase the professional stature of SROs. DCJS staff, in their role as grant administrators, have:

- promoted the concept of the SRO as an experienced law-enforcement officer who has a proven ability to work effectively with adolescents and young adults, and who is also able to perform multiple law-enforcement, instructional and mentoring roles in the school environment,
- established guidelines for the hiring and work assignment of SROs,
- required law enforcement and school authorities to create Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that set forth expectations and responsibilities of both schools and police during program operation,
- developed, implemented and maintained a comprehensive SRO grant monitoring and SRO program evaluation system,
- developed and implemented an evolving and wide-ranging curriculum of classes and workshops for SROs and school administrators. These classes meet the basic and specialized needs of SROs and administrators and draw on the talents of specialists in adolescent behavior, juvenile law, crisis management, etc. A current listing may be found at www.vaschoolsafety.com.
- revitalized the Virginia Association of School Resource Officers (VASRO) and sponsored their first statewide conference in March, 2001.

Virginia's commitment to SRO programming is also reflected in the fact that the state revenue portion of all state-provided, SRO funding (Byrne funds, local matching funds, and state revenue) has increased each year since state funding was inaugurated.

Goals and Objectives of the Second Evaluation Report

This report presents findings from the analysis of evaluation data collected during school year 1999-2000. Its goals and objectives are to:

- describe staff and student perceptions of school crime,
- summarize information about FY2000 reported school incidents
- describe the activities and strategies SROs used to prevent or reduce school crime,
- outline staff and student opinion with regard to the benefits and effectiveness of SROs, and
- confirm the validity of findings presented in our first report (based on FY1999 evaluation data).

¹ The first report is titled *Evaluation of Grant Funded School Resource Officer Programs*, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, March 2000.

² Eight grants funded multiple positions and 22 localities (programs) were awarded more than one grant.

¹ The estimate is based on a DCJS canvass of all Virginia police departments and sheriffs' offices.

Evaluation Methodology

Data Sources

The evaluation data was derived from three reports and two SRO-administered surveys:

SRO Quarterly Activities Report (QAR) A four-page form that records the activities that a SRO performs in their roles of crime prevention specialist, law enforcer, teacher of law-related education, and community liaison. SROs are also asked to discuss factors affecting their programs' success.

Student Incident Report (SIR) A two-sided scannable form that should be filled out when students (or other persons on school property) commit violations of the *Code of Virginia*. One SIR is filled out for each offender. The SIR records information about the type, time and location of an incident, the characteristics of the offender and victim(s), the Code violations that transpired, and the school based or criminal justice dispositions that result.

Lessons from the Field Report (LFF) A two-page, six-question form filled out near the end of a school year. SROs report on their accomplishments and challenges, successful strategies and techniques, and resources or training they feel would improve program performance.

Staff Survey on School Safety and Security A two-sided questionnaire/scannable form that solicits staff opinion about the incidence and location of school crimes, their fears of being victimized, and their opinions about SRO program effectiveness.

Student Survey on School Safety and Security A two-sided scannable form that asks students about crimes they've experienced or witnessed, their fear of being victimized at school and about SRO program effectiveness.

NOTE: Copies of these reports and surveys may be obtained by calling Dr. John Schuiteman at (804) 371-0864 or Judy Aikens (804) 786-8467.

The findings presented in this report are based on:

- 360 Quarterly Activity Reports
- 8,889 School Incident Reports
- 87 Lessons from the Field Reports
- 4,813 Completed Staff Surveys
- 36,625 Completed Student Surveys

Data Uses

Program evaluation plays an important, ongoing role in the development of the Virginia SRO program. In addition to assessing program performance, evaluation data is used in reports that inform local officials about:

- the types, frequency, location, etc. of the incidents occurring in their schools, and
- the extent to which their school staff and students feel safe, have been victimized while at school, are supportive of SRO programming, etc.

These reports are management tools in that the information they provide allows local program managers to assess the work priorities of their SROs. The data is also useful for public briefings on school safety and SRO program activity.

Test for Sub-Population Differences

To test the reliability of our findings, the analyses that produced our overall findings were repeated on data from major sub-population groups. We checked for differences in the findings between:

- male vs. female students (survey data)
- male vs. female staff (survey data)
- middle school vs. high school students (survey data)
- middle school vs. high school staff (survey data),
- middle school vs. high school incidents (SIR data),
- urban vs. suburban vs. rural incidents (SIR data).

These comparisons revealed few dramatic differences. Differences that appeared significant and that may warrant further examination are noted throughout the report.

Limitations of the Data

The findings presented in this report are not based on randomly selected samples of Virginia SROs, school incidents, students or school staff and, thus, cannot be said to reflect SRO programming, school incidents, or student/staff opinion across the Commonwealth. Rather, they reflect the programming, incidents, and student/staff opinions associated with the 131 SROs who occupied 117 DCJS-funded SRO positions in FY2000. The localities served by DCJS-funded SROs are more rural than those served by Virginia SROs funded through other sources. In addition, the SRO programs that received DCJS grant money were newer than those funded otherwise.

Report Structure: Perception, Reality and SRO Response to School Crime

The findings are organized under four topics. The reader will learn about:

- the scope and nature of the school crime problem,
 - as defined by the perceptions and personal experiences of students and staff, and
 - as documented by 8,889 SIRs, reports on actual incidents that occurred in school year 1999-2000,
- the efforts that FY2000 DCJS-funded SROs made in response to the problem,
 - as described in FY2000 SRO Quarterly Activity Reports, activities undertaken in their roles as law enforcers, instructors of legal education, crime prevention specialists, and community liaisons;
- the opinions that students and staff held with regard to SROs and SRO efforts (as revealed by the staff and student surveys); and
- the extent to which the findings in this report affirm those in the first evaluation report.

THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF SCHOOL CRIME

Perceptions of School Crime Held by Students and Staff

NOTE: The findings in this section are based on the opinions of the students and staff who were surveyed in spring of 2000.

Survey Respondents

In the spring of 2000, DCJS-funded SROs were asked to survey their students and staff on the topic of school safety. They were instructed to either survey all students (i.e. all present on a given day) or survey a random sample of 100 students from each grade level. Staff were to be surveyed at staff meetings.

Completed student surveys were received from 121 schools (38 middle schools and 83 high schools). The average sample from each school was 300 students. Completed staff surveys were received from 113 schools (43 middle schools and 70 high schools). The average number of staff surveyed from each school was 43.

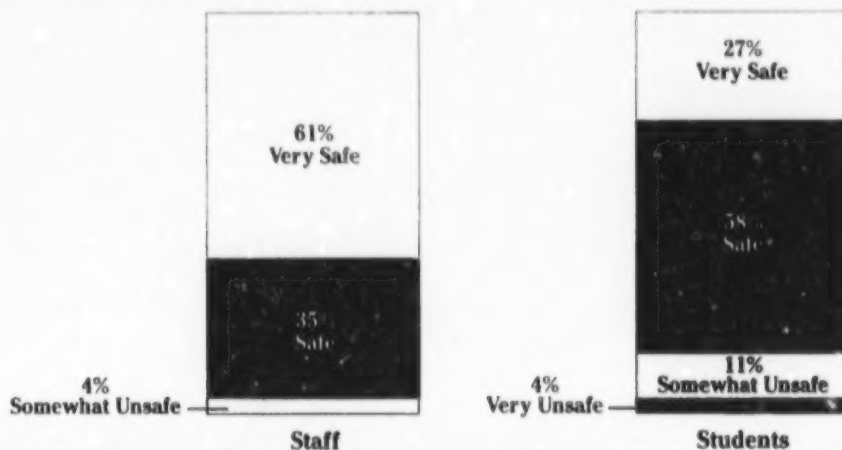
36,625 Students	4,813 Staff
38% from middle schools (grades 6 to 8) 62% from high schools (grades 9 to 12)	27% from middle school 67% from high school 6% work at both
52% female 48% male	72% female 28% male
35% attended SRO class/presentation 65% did not attend any such class/presentation	41% attended SRO class/presentation 59% did not attend any such class/presentation
35% occasional or regular SRO contact 65% had no or almost no such contact	86% occasional or regular SRO contact 14% had no or almost no such contact
	21% 4+ years experience with SROs 44% 1 to 3 years experience with SROs 35% less than 1 year of experience with SROs
	76% teachers 12% support staff 5% clerical 5% counselors 3% administrators

Student and Staff Feelings of Safety

- The overwhelming majority of students and staff feel safe at school. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the students and 96% of the staff indicated that they either felt "somewhat safe" or "very safe." As Chart 1 shows, however, the percentage of staff who felt "very safe" (61%) was considerably higher than the percentage among students (27%). This difference was also revealed by the FY1999 data, where 50% of staff reported feeling "very safe" compared with only 22% of the students.

CHART 1

How Safe do you Feel at School?



Sub-population Findings:

- Female students and staff were *less likely* to feel "very safe" than male students and staff.
- Urban students and staff were *less likely* to feel "very safe" than suburban or rural students and staff.

CONCLUSION

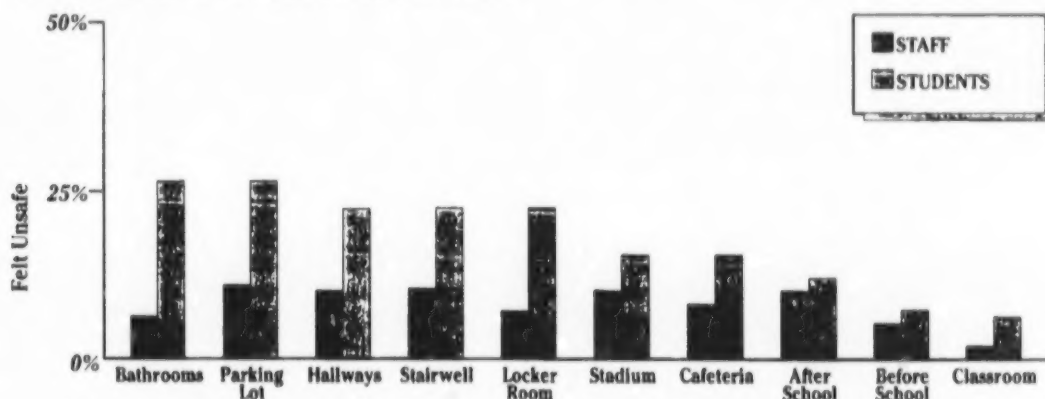
- *The overwhelming majority of students and staff felt safe at school. However, staff were much more likely to report feeling "very safe" than were students.*

Student/Staff Vulnerability in Certain School Locations and at Certain Times

Chart 2 shows the percentage of students and staff who reported feeling either "somewhat unsafe" or "very unsafe" at various school locations or at certain times of the school day:

CHART 2

Percentage of Staff and Students Who Felt Somewhat or Very Unsafe at Various Locations or Times



Sub-population Findings:

- Middle school students were *more likely* than high school students to feel unsafe in school bathrooms, parking lots, hallways, walking to school, etc.
- Urban students were *more likely* to feel unsafe than suburban or rural students when in bathrooms, parking lots, halls, walking to school, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

- *Students feel less safe than staff at all school locations and before and after school.*
- *Fear of victimization varies by school location, yet there is no location where staff or student vulnerability is alarmingly high.*
- *There are five locations within school buildings where students felt noticeably less safe than staff (bathrooms, parking lots, hallways, stairwells, and locker rooms). These places, traditionally, have little or no adult monitoring or supervision.*

Staff Fears of Being Victimized

Staff were asked to rate their fear of being victimized by intruders, students, gang members and parents. Fourteen percent (14%) said they were either "somewhat fearful" or "very fearful" of intruders; twice as many than the staff who were fearful of students, gang members or parents (6%, 7% and 6% respectively). Another 43% were "a little fearful" of intruders, a slightly higher percentage than those who reported feeling "a little fearful" of students, gang members or parents (35%, 23% and 26% respectively).

Sub-population Finding

- Female staff were *more likely* to fear victimization by intruders than male staff.

CONCLUSION

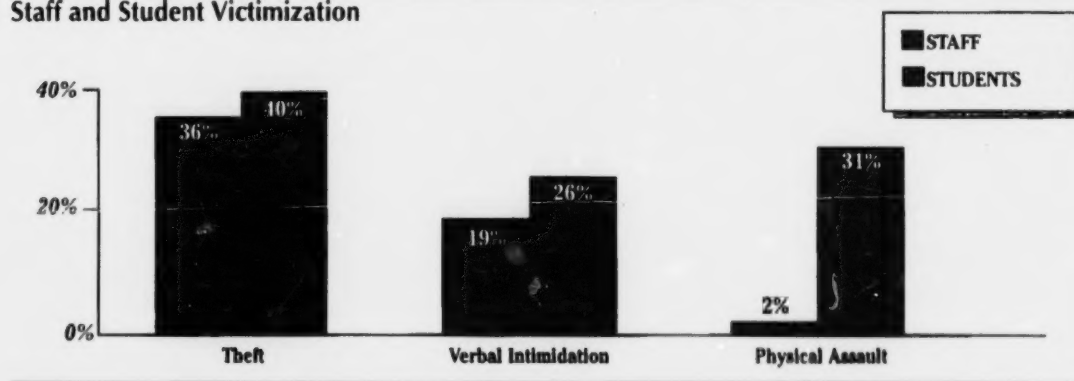
- *Although, for the most part, staff felt safe from victimization, they feared victimization by intruders more than they feared victimization by students, gang members or parents.*

Student and Staff Exposure to Crime

Students and staff were asked whether they had been victimized at school or at a school-sponsored event in the past year. As Chart 3 shows, a substantial number of students and staff reported that they had been victims of theft, verbal intimidation or physical assault.

CHART 3

Staff and Student Victimization



Other findings: Five percent (5%) of the students said they had been in a fight and 16% of staff said someone either damaged their property or threatened to damage their property.

Sub-population Findings

- Male students were *more likely* to have been "punched, slapped, or kicked on purpose" than female students.
- Middle school students were *more likely* than high school students to have had items stolen from them, to have been threatened or bullied, and to have been "punched, slapped, or kicked on purpose."
- Urban students were *more likely* to have had items stolen from their desks, book bags, etc. than suburban or rural students,
- Urban staff were *more likely* to have had items stolen from their desks and more likely to have had someone try to intimidate or threaten them than suburban or rural staff.

Students as Witnesses of Crime

Students were asked whether they had witnessed certain criminal behavior in the past year:

- 70%⁴ saw someone being punched, slapped or kicked on purpose,
- 61% saw someone being threatened or bullied,
- 40% saw someone in possession of, or under the influence of, marijuana or some other illegal drug,
- 34% saw someone in possession of, or under the influence of, alcohol (beer, wine, etc.),
- 26% saw someone with a knife or other sharp object (for protection), and
- 5% saw someone (other than police) in possession of a gun

CONCLUSION

- ***A substantial number of students and staff are victimized or exposed to criminal behavior while at school or school events. These findings are similar to those revealed in our first evaluation report.***

⁴ This and other groups of percentages in the text do not add to 100% because each percentage in the group is based on a separate "yes or no" type question, that is, a question all respondents marked either "yes" or "no." The reader should assume, for example, that if 61% of the students saw "someone being bullied or threatened, 39% of the students did not.

Reality: School Incident Reports (SIRs) from School Year 1999-2000

Grant-funded SROs are asked to submit School Incident Reports when persons violate the *Code of Virginia* while on school property (regardless of whether charges are actually filed). A total of 8,889 SIRs were submitted and successfully scanned during school year 1999-2000. One SIR form is completed for each offender of an incident, even when the incident involves multiple offenders, victims and/or code violations.⁵ To simplify the presentation of findings, a single SIR will be treated as a single incident. The number of SIRs or incidents (8,889) and the number of Code violations, offenses or crimes (10,681) will be the report's primary measures of school-based crime.

Incident Types

SROs were asked to classify the incidents as person crimes or property crimes and also, as drug or gang-related crimes.⁶ Incidents involving alcohol possession or abuse may have been classified as drug crimes. Chart 4 shows how the incidents were classified.

CHART 4

SRO Classification of Reported Incidents



Unclassified incidents involved offenses such as truancy, possession or use of tobacco, disorderly conduct, profanity, vandalism, etc.

Incident Code Violations

A total of 10,681 Code violations were reported. *Only those accounting for 1% or more of this total are listed below:*

11% disorderly conduct (1,134)	2% possess drugs (262)
9% profanity (1,005)	1% possess knives, cutters, etc. (141)
8% verbal threatening (823)	1% use or possess alcohol (132)
7% hitting (741)	1% trespassing (118)
6% truancy (685)	1% use drugs (112)
6% mutual combat (678)	1% sell/distribute drugs (86)
5% petit/grand larceny (586)	1% aggravated assault (84)
5% simple assault (580)	1% sexual harassment (82)
4% shoving (449)	1% written threats (78)
4% vandalism or graffiti (375)	1% offensive touching (74)

Violations involving intentional physical violence (shoving, hitting, simple assault, mutual assault, aggravated assault, felonious assault, malicious wounding, rape, and sexual assault) accounted for 24% of all violations.

⁵ Because incidents involving multiple offenders occur, the number of SIRs submitted is normally greater than the number of incidents that occur. Only about 5% of all incidents involved multiple offenders and only about 10% involved more than one victim.

⁶ Since they could mark all categories that applied, about 1% of the 8,889 incidents had multiple classifications.

Sub-population Findings:

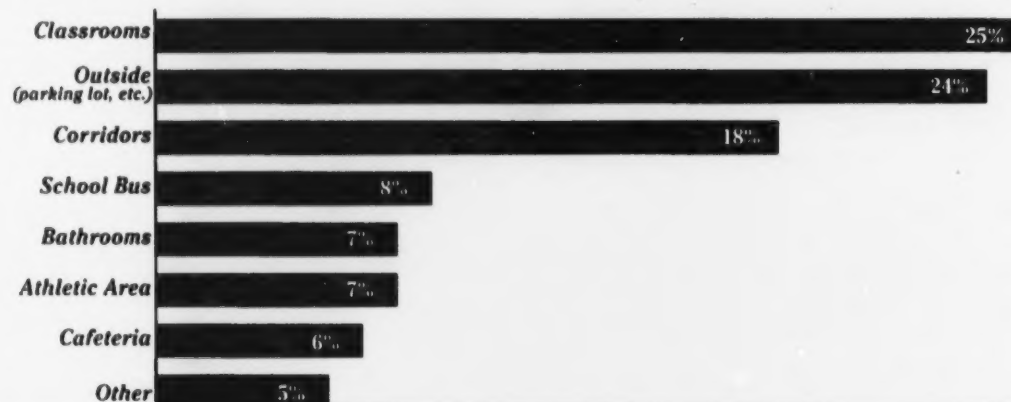
- Incidents occurring in middle schools were *more likely* to involve crimes against persons (hitting, simple assault, verbal threats, etc.) and *less likely* to involve illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco than incidents occurring in high schools.

Incident Location

Chart 5 shows the locations where the incidents or crimes occurred.

CHART 5

Locations of Reported Incidents



Sub-population Finding

- Incidents occurring in middle schools were more likely to occur inside school buildings and more often inside classrooms than those occurring in high schools.

Offender Characteristics (includes students and non-students)

Type:	Students	90%	Gender:	Male	73%
	Non-student juveniles	2%		Female	27%
	Staff members	1%			
	Status unknown	7%			
Age:	6-10	2%	School ⁷ :	Elementary	2%
	11-12	11%		Middle School	37%
	13-14	27%		High School	62%
	15-16	31%			
	17-18	14%			
	19-65	1%			
	Unknown	14%			

Prior Incidents: Thirty-one percent (31%) of the offenders were involved in previous SIR-reported incidents (25% in incidents occurring earlier in school year 1999-2000).

⁷ Virginia has a number of schools that combine elementary (K-5), middle (6-8) and high school (9-12) grades. The students and staff of these schools (Combination Schools, Junior High Schools, Intermediate Schools, Senior High Schools) were assigned to one of the standard school categories (elementary, middle, high) on the basis of their grade levels. When necessary, students at Alternative Schools were also assigned on this basis.

Fifty-two percent (52%) of the incidents (n=4,593) involved circumstances where one or more persons were victimized.⁸ A profile of these victims follows:

Type:	Students	76%	Gender:	Student Victims:	Male	59%
	Staff	20%			Female	41%
	Non-student juveniles	3%		Staff Victims:	Male	48%
	Status unknown	1%			Female	52%
Age:	10-11	8%	School Level:	Student Victims:	Middle	45%
	12-13	26%			High	55%
	14-15	30%		Staff Victims:	Middle	41%
	16-17	20%			High	59%
	18-19	3%				
	20-29	3%				
	30-39	5%				
	40-49	4%				
50-65	1%					

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"By year's end, the new administrative staff was including me in more disciplinary matters. We began revising our school safety procedures. I worked closely with the school system truancy supervisor and got several students back to school on a regular basis."

SRO, Rockingham County Sheriff's Office

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Referrals

School officials and SROs made referrals in 83% (n=6,632) of the incidents involving student offenders (n=8,039). Because multiple referrals were made in many of these incidents, the number of referrals is greater than the number of incidents. A total of 10,350 referrals were made. These referrals are profiled below:

Referrals to School Personnel and School Programs	Percent	Number
principals and vice-principals	50.80%	5,262
guidance counselors	4.60%	478
student assistance programs	1.60%	162
truancy or dropout programs	1.30%	133
anger management programs	0.07%	69
mediation programs	0.06%	68
psychiatrists or psychologists	0.05%	47
social workers	0.03%	37
unspecified referrals	8.90%	916
Referrals to Community Service Programs		
protective service agencies	0.10%	11
to social service agencies	0.60%	60
mental health or family counseling programs	1.50%	159
other (unidentified) referrals	3.50%	359
Referrals to Juvenile or General District Courts	25.00%	2,589
TOTAL	100.00%	10,350

⁶ Ninety-percent (90%) of these incidents were single-victim incidents. Five-percent (5%) were two-victim incidents and 5% involved three or more victims.

School-Based Sanctions

The school incident (SIR) data revealed that SROs and school authorities imposed school-based sanctions in 83% (n=6,673) of the incidents involving student offenders (n=8,039). Because some offenders drew more than one type of sanction, the number of sanctions (n=6,901) is greater than the number of incidents or offenders.

- 4,416 involved suspension from school (applied to 55% of all student offenders)
- 909 involved placement in detention (applied to 11% of all student offenders), and
- 1,576 involved sanctions not captured by the SIR form (applied to 20% of all student offenders).

Sub-population Finding:

- Incidents occurring in middle school were more likely to involve the use of school detention and less likely to involve referral to juvenile court than incidents occurring in high schools.

Criminal Investigative Reports

SROs filed criminal investigative reports with the juvenile court when (usually after consultation with school authorities) they decided to prosecute offenders. These reports were filed in 30% (n=2,411) of all incidents involving student offenders.

"Students are reporting
 conflicts before they escalate
 into assaults or disorderly
 conduct. Students sometimes
 ask me to brief their friends
 on the consequences of
 fighting in school. I have also
 worked with several students
 and their families to deter
 domestic assaults, truancy,
 and gang activity."
 SRO, Chesterfield Co. Police Department

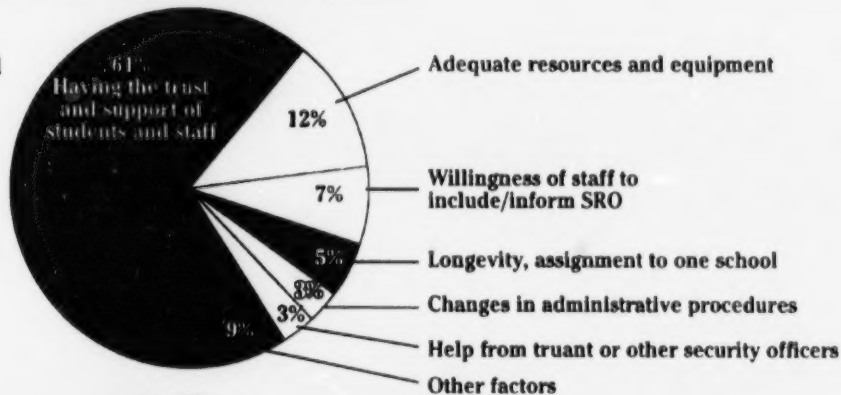
Factors that Help or Hinder Law Enforcement within Schools

SROs were asked if there were factors in their environment that helped or hindered their performance as law-enforcers. One hundred and seventeen SROs (89% of the 131 SROs who submitted QARs¹⁰) cited 186 factors that helped law enforcement. Eighty-six SROs (65% of those submitting QARs) cited 94 factors that hindered this function. The pie charts in Chart 6 reveal the types and the prevalence of factors identified.

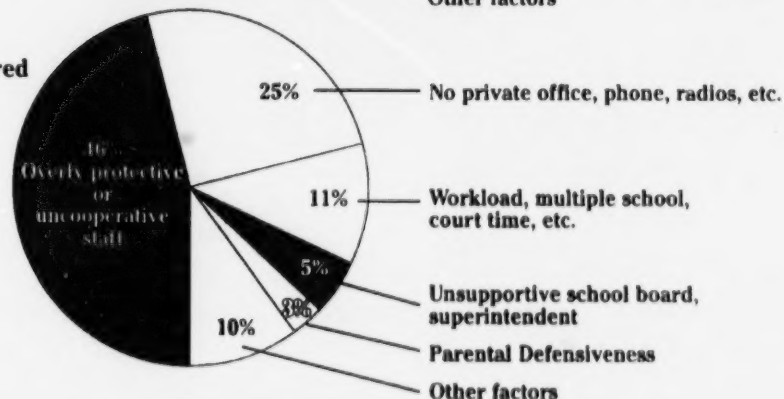
CHART 6

Factors that Helped or Hindered SRO Law Enforcement

Factors that Helped



Factors that Hindered



CONCLUSION

- Although most SROs identified helpful factors, fifty percent (50%) cited factors that hindered their performance as law enforcers.

¹⁰ Because of turnover, a total of 131 sworn officers were assigned to the 117 DCJS-funded positions during FY2000.

SROs as Instructors of Law-Related Education Classes

Eighty-one percent (81%) of FY 2000, DCJS-funded SROs conducted law-related education classes (LRE). A total of 596 classes were conducted with a reported attendance of 59,742 persons. Ninety-five percent of the attendees were middle and high school students and staff. Table 1 presents a classification of attendees and Table 2 provides information on the content of the LRE classes.

FY 2000 LRE Classes

Table 1: Type of Audience, Number of Classes, and Attendance

TYPE OF AUDIENCE	Number of Classes	Attendance	Percent of Attendance
High School Students/Staff:	331	36,113	60%
Middle School Students/Staff:	214	20,353	35%
Elementary School Students/Staff:	7	674	1%
Community Groups and Organizations:	22	819	1%
Parents:	13	853	1%
Other:	9	930	2%
Totals:	596	59,742	100%

Table 2: Type of Class, Number of Classes Taught, and Attendance

CLASS TYPE	Number of Classes	Percent of Total Classes Taught	Attendance	Percent of Total Attendance
Class Action (juvenile law, procedures, courts):	186	31%	21,351	35%
Drugs (alcohol, illegal, tobacco):	77	13%	5,598	9%
Career in law enforcement:	60	10%	3,351	6%
Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol:	52	9%	5,025	8%
Constitutional or legal rights:	42	7%	2,929	5%
Motor vehicle law; traffic safety:	40	7%	5,239	9%
Other; domestic violence, self-defense, etc.:	35	6%	2,270	4%
School safety; school violence and crime:	32	5%	5,268	9%
SRO program; SRO roles and responsibilities:	26	4%	5,338	9%
Forensics (investigation, finger printing, etc.):	21	4%	1,358	2%
Rape; Sexual Harassment:	13	2%	1,130	2%
Larceny, theft, shoplifting, forgery:	12	2%	885	2%
Totals:	596	100%	59,742	100%

CONCLUSION

- *These findings show that SROs are active participants in the educational process, and are imparting knowledge and information that, heretofore, may have been absent from middle or high school curriculums.*

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"We only had two lunch periods so students bunched up outside the front entrance waiting to eat.

This provided opportunity for problems. The administration added a third lunch period so more students could eat promptly. This reduced the number waiting to the point that we could move them to a safer location at the back of the building. It also cleared the hallways for people entering the building."

SRO, Carroll County Sheriff's Office

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SROs as Crime Prevention Specialists

SROs were asked about their use of the following five crime prevention strategies:

1. participation in or initiation of school safety audits,
2. application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles,
3. creation or improvement of school crime prevention policies,
4. early intervention in conflicts before they escalate into reportable incidents, and
5. increasing student awareness and participation in crime prevention activities.

Their responses are described in detail in the sections below.

SRO Participation in School Safety Audits

Fifty-five (55) SROs reported their participation in a formal audit or assessment of school safety. Forty (40) of these SROs provided descriptions of this activity. A content analysis of these descriptions revealed that:

- 12 SROs participated in a formal safety audit (member of a team conducting a legally mandated audit),
- 16 SROs conducted school security audits in the course of improving their school's crisis-management plan,
- 12 SROs performed informal, self-initiated, safety audits, and
- 13 SROs reviewed school safety as members of their schools' or school divisions' safety committees.

Application of CPTED Principles

A CPTED application refers to any change in the physical design of a building, property, or neighborhood that reduces the probability of the space becoming a venue for crime. Seventy-eight (78) SROs reported 99 completed and 8 recommended applications.

Of these 107 applications:

- 24% improved control over entry to or exit from school (new locks, restriction or removal of under-used entrances and exits, metal detectors, visitor passes),
- 23% increased the monitoring or communications capabilities of security personnel (surveillance cameras, caller-ID, answering machines, two-way radios, cell phones and pagers, etc.), and
- 18% increased public/staff visibility of school activities through the trimming or removal of bushes, shrubs, trees or other physical obstructions,
- 14% altered automobile traffic patterns to improve security and safety (speed bumps, new or modified traffic lanes, redesigned parking lots, improved signage, etc.),
- 12% improved or installed new lighting in parking lots, walkways, hallways, stairwells, alleys, etc.
- 8% redirected and/or rescheduled the flow of pedestrian traffic in hallways, stairwells, cafeteria, etc.
- 1% involved a spatial analysis or site assessment of school grounds and buildings using aerial photos, inspection of blueprints, etc.

Creation or Improvement of School Crime Prevention Policies

Eighty-six SROs (66%) described efforts to develop or improve school crime prevention policies. One hundred fifty (150) policy changes were identified, and of these,

- 31% placed new restrictions on visitor entry to schools or school-sponsored events (lock under-used doors, new auto-decal, school check-in, visitor-pass policies, enforcement of trespass laws, etc.),
- 25% increased security and monitoring efforts (more security officers, scheduled patrols, dress code and book bag policies, class schedule changes to re-route or reduce student traffic, etc.)
- 18% established new procedures for handling incidents (new penalties or prosecution policies for misconduct (e.g. bullying, theft, false alarms), "no-contact" contracts for combatants, updated search and seizure policies, etc.),

"Students who arrive before the first bell rings, are now required to come inside the school. They must report to the auditorium, gym, or cafeteria where teachers can monitor their behavior."

SRO, Bristol City Police Department

Early Intervention in Conflicts

SROs were asked if they had resolved any conflicts before they became reportable incidents. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the SROs estimated that they had intervened in 2,029 conflicts. These conflicts grouped as follows:

- 20% conflicts in which continued or eventual violence was possible (4% were fights or assaults; 16% rumors about fights or threats of attack),
- 15% instances of verbal abuse (7% profanity; 7% disorderly conduct; 1% inappropriate sexual language),
- 12% name calling, insults, spreading rumors, or boyfriend-girlfriend arguments,
- 8% domestic abuse or neighborhood disputes,
- 6% truancy and tardiness,
- 3% possession or use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco,
- 2% possession of weapons (knives, cutters, bludgeons, guns),
- 2% minor theft, attempted theft, shoplifting and possession of stolen property,
- 1% automobile driver conflicts,
- 1% students in emotional crisis or threatening suicide, and
- 30% unspecified conflicts (no descriptions provided).

SRO Efforts to Increase Student Awareness

SROs were asked to describe their efforts to increase student awareness and participation in crime prevention activities. Sixty-six SROs cited 124 separate activities, which grouped as follows:

"I now track even the minor infractions that usually do not involve me. This has enabled me to identify and intervene with students who exhibit minor behavior problems. I hope this early interaction will prevent further more serious infractions. At least it helps me identify "at risk" students."

SRO, Lynchburg City Police Department

CONCLUSIONS

- **The data provided substantial evidence that SROs are performing as crime prevention specialists. They are participating in school security assessments, applying CPTED principles to reduce the probability of crime, developing and improving school crime prevention policies, intervening in conflicts before they escalate into reportable incidents, and engaging students and staff in crime prevention activities.**

¹¹These committees conducted their own safety audits, discussed and recommended CPTED applications, and increased student awareness through poster campaigns, skits, and special assemblies.

SROs as School/Community Liaisons

SROs are practitioners of community-oriented policing and, as such, are expected to solicit help in resolving conflict from as many school and community resources as appropriate. While SROs were not required to record their referrals to school or community resources on SIRs, a question on the QAR asks them to estimate the number and types of referrals they made. SROs estimated that during FY2000, they made 6,391 referrals to school or community resource persons. These referrals grouped as follows:

School-Based Resources			Community-Based Resources		
Number	%		Number	%	
1,406	34%	guidance counselor	1,121	49%	juvenile court
745	18%	conflict mediation program	296	13%	mental health/family counseling
482	12%	truancy/dropout prevention program	270	12%	recreational/youth development.
384	9%	psychologist	140	6%	social services
308	7%	anger management program	116	5%	protective services
202	5%	social worker	84	4%	victim services
198	5%	student assistance program.	48	2%	domestic violence services
<u>392</u>	10%	other	<u>199</u>	9%	other
4,117			2,274		

The data is difficult to interpret because many DCJS-funded SROs are in rural localities where some of these do not exist. SRO use of school/community resources will be examined in a future evaluation report.

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*"I think the principals and staff
are starting to understand my
duties and responsibilities.
The administrators now use me
to help them solve a wide variety
of problems. My relationships
and knowledge of county
resources has made my job a
great deal easier."*

SRO, Prince George County Sheriff's Office

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STUDENT AND STAFF OPINION OF SRO PROGRAMMING

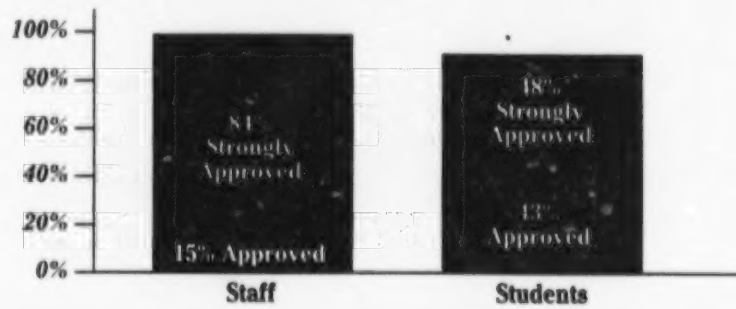
(as revealed in the student and staff survey data)

Staff and Students Strongly Supported the Presence of SROs

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the staff said they *strongly agreed* with the statement: "I support having a SRO assigned to my school" and another 15% simply *agreed* with it. These same percentages among *students* were 48% and 43%. Although, students were less likely to be in strong agreement, the overall *agree and strongly agree* rating of both groups was very high (91% among students and 99% among staff).

CHART 7

Percent of Staff and Students who Approved or Strongly Approved of the Presence of SROs



Sub-population Findings

- A high level of support for SROs was found in all major staff and student sub-populations (urban, suburban, and rural, male and female, middle school and high school).
- Middle school students were more likely to "strongly agree" that SROs should be in schools than high school students (53% vs. 45%) and, similarly, female students were more likely to "strongly agree" than male students (52% vs. 45%).

Support for SROs Increased as Interaction with SROs Increased

Staff and students responded to statements about their interaction with SROs. The staff survey asked each respondent how long they had worked in a school with a SRO, whether they had attended a presentation or class by a SRO, and whether their level of direct contact with SROs was "regular," "occasional," or "infrequent?" The student survey asked the latter two questions, plus one that asked if they had ever spoken to a SRO "outside of class."

The responses to these questions were cross-tabulated with those indicating staff and student support for the presence of SROs. The analysis found that support for SROs increases as the degree of staff/student interaction increases. This is particularly evident in the data measuring direct contact with SROs.

Amount of Direct SRO Contact	Staff Who Strongly Support	Students Who Strongly Support
Regular (several times a month):	90%	64%
Occasional (once or twice a semester):	79%	50%
None or Almost None:	66%	35%

Sub-Population Finding

Female staff were less likely than male staff to have regular contact with SROs (24% vs. 62%).

Because objective and reliable measures of SRO program impact have yet to be developed, we relied upon opinion data for this appraisal. Staff and students were asked to respond to statements about the effectiveness of their school's SRO program and SROs were asked to report on their accomplishments (LFF) and their program's effectiveness (QAR). An analysis of staff/student responses and the SROs' written comments on LFF and QAR reports revealed the following:

Staff and Students Viewed SROs as Effective

Most staff and the majority of students said SROs produced positive outcomes in their schools. The extent to which these groups agreed or strongly agreed with specific outcome statements is presented below:

Suggested Outcome Statement	Staff Agreement	Students Agreement
SROs have increased student knowledge of the legal system:	90%	59%
SROs have increased student understanding of what's legal and illegal:	91%	66%
SROs have reduced fear of crime among staff/students:	83%	59%
SROs have reduced student fighting:	82%	53%

Staff Agreed that SROs Provide Other Benefits

Because staff acceptance is critical to SRO program success, staff were asked to respond to additional outcome statements. Staff agreement with these statements was as follows:

Suggested Outcome Statement	Staff Agreement
SROs have reduced threats and bullying among students:	83%
SROs have made it easier to maintain order in school:	87%
SROs have improved educator-law enforcement collaboration:	92%
The availability of the SRO to teachers and staff is adequate:	88%
The visibility of the SRO in school is adequate:	84%
The involvement of the SRO with students is adequate:	87%

SROs Report a Reduction in the Number of Assaults

One other indicator of SRO program effectiveness came from the comments on LFF and QAR reports. Of the 99 SROs who provided these comments, 35 (35%) claimed a reduction of criminal behavior as one of their program's accomplishments or noted that such had been the conclusion of staff who observed this phenomenon. Twenty-nine (29%) reported that there had been a reduction in the number of fights or violent assaults since their arrival at school. The fact that these comments were not prompted adds to their significance.

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"Problems that seem very small or even childish to adults may seem like large, earth-shattering problems to teenagers. One of my responsibilities is to seek out students who are having problems, listen to the teachers who know about these problems, and make myself available to that child."

SRO, Carroll County Sheriff's Office

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CONCLUSIONS

- *The overwhelming majority of all students and staff support the presence of SROs in school.*
- *Substantial student/staff majorities rated SROs as effective in reducing the fear and incidence of school crime.*

COMPARING FY2000 FINDINGS WITH FY1999 FINDINGS

The findings presented in our first evaluation report were based on FY1999 data that was less robust than the current, FY2000 evaluation data. The FY1999 data came from fewer QAR, SIR and LFF reports and fewer student and staff surveys. Furthermore the FY1999 SIR data combined both manually-entered and scanned-in data, the former from SIR forms whose administration was not as closely monitored as the more recent, scannable SIR forms. None the less, the comparison of current FY2000 findings with those presented in the first report (FY1999) revealed that the findings presented above confirm those presented earlier. Table 3 compares some major findings from the two data sets.

Table 3: Comparison of FY1999 Findings with FY2000 Findings

Measure	FY 1999 Finding	FY 2000 Finding
students who felt "somewhat" or "very" safe at school:	78%	84%
staff who felt "somewhat" or "very" safe at school:	85%	96%
students who were victims of theft:	36%	40%
staff who were victims of theft:	36%	15%
students who had been bullied or threatened:	25%	26%
staff who had been bullied or threatened:	12%	19%
students who saw someone punched, slapped or kicked on purpose:	70%	70%
SIR-reported incidents classified as crimes against persons:	51%	49%
SIR-reported incidents classified as property crimes:	18%	11%
Incidents involving "possession or use of tobacco":	15%	19%
Incidents involving "disorderly conduct":	11%	14%
Incidents involving "vandalism or graffiti":	4%	3%
Incidents occurring outside the school building (e.g. parking lot):	26%	31%
Incidents occurring in school corridors:	18%	19%
Offenders who were males:	73%	76%
Offenders who were in grades 6 to 8:	36%	42%
Offenders who were involved in previous SIR-reported incidents:	31%	29%

Another noteworthy finding was a slight across-the-board increase in all percentages measuring how safe students and staff felt at school (how safe in general and how safe at different school locations). This small but improved sense of safety may be, to some degree, a product of their schools' SRO program.

FY2000 Data are of Higher Quality than the FY1999 Data

The findings of this report are based on data that is of higher quality than available for our first evaluation report. The FY2000 report data was obtained from SROs who had more job experience and from students and staff with more exposure to SROs. The FY1999 staff data came from staff, only 46% of whom had more than one year of association with SROs, with only 3% having more than 3 years of association. In contrast, FY2000 staff data came from staff, 64% of whom had more than one year of association, with 21% having had over 3 years.

Given that 75% of the student data in both reports came from the same schools, we can also assume that the FY2000 findings are based on the opinion of students who, in comparison to the FY1999 sample, had more experience with SROs.

The FY2000 findings are also based on a larger volume of each type of evaluation data.

Data Sources	FY1999 Data	FY2000 Data
School Incident Reports	3,244	8,889
School Staff Survey Respondents	2,067	4,813
Student Survey Respondents	11,824	36,624
SRO Quarterly Activities Reports	104	360
Annual Lessons from the Field Reports	42	87

The findings of both reports are also bolstered by the face validity or clarity of the items on the survey forms—items whose validity and reliability were established in previous studies.

CONCLUSION

- *Findings from the FY2000 data confirm the findings from the FY1999 report. This fact lends greater credence to both sets of findings and to the assumption that SROs, when properly selected, trained, and assigned to purposeful and planned SRO programs, will improve the security and safety of our schools.*

OVERALL CONCLUSION

While many students witness illegal behavior and a substantial number experience theft, minor assault and bullying, the overwhelming majority of students and staff feel safe at school.

SROs respond to a wide variety of criminal behavior—behavior that occurs at a wide variety of school locations.

Virginia's DCJS-assisted SRO programs are reducing school violence and increasing the feeling of safety among students and staff. The SROs are succeeding in their roles as law enforcers, instructors of law-related education, crime prevention specialists and community liaisons and are viewed as effective agents of change. They deal with a wide range of criminal behavior and are providing services that are critical to the improvement of school safety. They constitute an increasingly professional cadre who have earned a high degree of support from students and staff.



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